



Coast Guard Flag Voice 13

ENLISTED ADVANCEMENT LIST CUTOFFS

In [Flag Voice 9](#), I discussed why it takes what seemingly is a long time to get out the enlisted SWE advancement lists. This is a follow-up and describes how we determine cutoffs and why it is difficult.

Current State

SWE Advancement Eligibility List cutoffs are established twice a year. The MAY SWE advancement eligibility list includes the results of E4 through E9 examinations. MAY SWE cutoffs now are published separately in October. NOVEMBER SWE cutoffs are shown directly on the NOVEMBER advancement eligibility list published in February of the next year. While the NOVEMBER SWE involves administering E-4, E-5, and E-6 exams only, the advancement eligibility list also includes revised cutoffs for the existing E-7 through E-9 lists from the previous MAY SWE.

The CWO Appointment Eligibility List usually is released in late July or early August -- following a June Board. To provide the most accurate MAY SWE cutoffs, it has been necessary to wait until October to account for those enlisted personnel who decline or accept appointment to CWO. Rather than delay publishing the MAY SWE results until October, the MAY SWE advancement eligibility list, which becomes effective the next January, is published without the cutoffs in August to provide this information to the field at the earliest opportunity.

Background

Before implementing S.P.E.A.R., we routinely published lists within 11 weeks of SWE administration. What are the differences between then and now? Specifically, the SWE schedule (May and November vice March and September) and S.P.E.A.R.

Let's take a "before and after" look at S.P.E.A.R. The pre-S.P.E.A.R. September 1993 SWE cycle eligibility list was published on or about Thanksgiving 1993 -- 11 weeks after SWE administration. To publish that list, we needed to do two things. First, in mid-October, we needed to forecast advancements for only two months ahead (November and December of that year) to identify the carryovers from the existing eligibility lists. Second, we needed to forecast advancements through December 1994 (the next 14 months) to determine the cutoffs on the new list.

By contrast, when we published the May 98 list, we first had to forecast advancements for the next five months to determine carryovers and next 17 months to determine cutoffs. Basically, the more in advance we administer the SWE, the more uncertainty we face.

Forecasting advancements requires us to factor in constantly changing billets and personnel. RELADS,

retirements, CWO appointments, and members assigned out of rate (petty officer billets) all create advancement opportunities. Likewise, members returning from out of rate, various Service needs, and retired recalls decrease advancement opportunities. The number of members desiring to change rates also is difficult, if not impossible, to predict. Generally, none of these changes is often known or easily predictable, especially the earlier we administer the SWE. Billet additions and deletions also challenge those tasked with forecasting advancements.

Subsequently we revise the cutoffs (or "revised cutoffs") periodically to account for known changes in the enlisted work force during the effective period of an advancement eligibility list. Revised cutoffs can occur several times during an advancement cycle. We make our best effort at revising cutoffs before an SWE date to save as many as possible from studying and competing in an SWE if they probably will advance from the current eligibility list. With these challenges in mind, the fact remains permanently delaying cutoffs does not significantly advance list publication, since carryovers must still be forecast almost 6 months into the next cycle. Without cutoffs and carryovers, we probably could match the old 11-week publication schedule.

Ultimately, the issue comes down to the classical trade-off between timely publication and accuracy. Despite our best efforts to ensure timely publication, substitute SWEs, score key corrections, and late submission of enlisted performance evaluations will always create delays.

Potential Changes

We are working on several initiatives to improve this process:

The Enlisted Advancement Study Team (EAST), an outcome of the Workforce Cultural Audit, is developing recommendations to better align the enlisted advancement system to Service and workforce needs, with a report expected by February 1999. This includes an in-depth look at the composition of the final multiple.

A working group is looking at improving the alignment of the advancement and assignment systems. They are considering the possibilities of returning to the MAR/SEP SWE cycle or going to only one SWE per year with supplemental advancement lists. The latter would simplify determining carryovers (only one list in play). Either would provide a shorter time horizon to predict cutoffs. Also, better matching the CWO appointment process to the enlisted advancement process is another opportunity to improve the predictability of flow from the enlisted to CWO work forces and hence improve enlisted eligibility list accuracy.

We are committed to do our very best at balancing timeliness with accuracy.

Regards, FL Ames

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